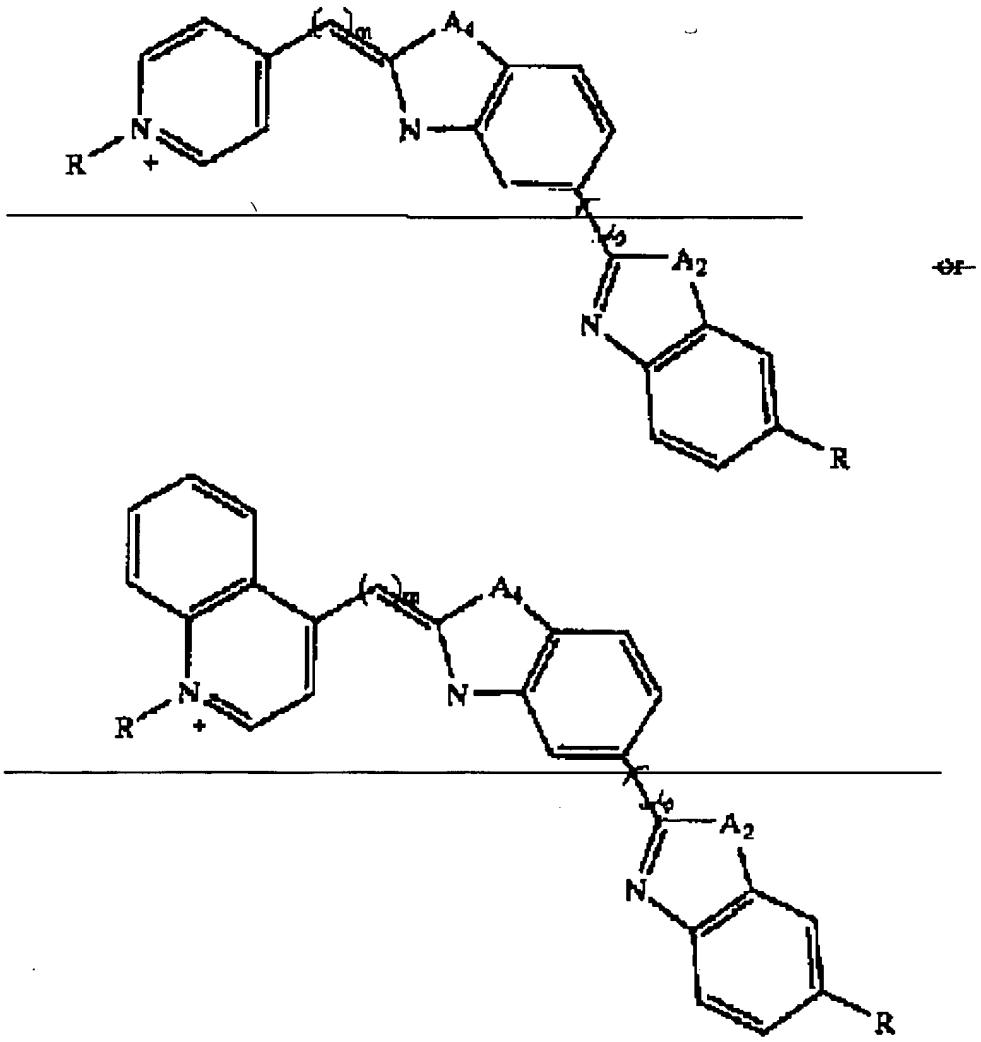
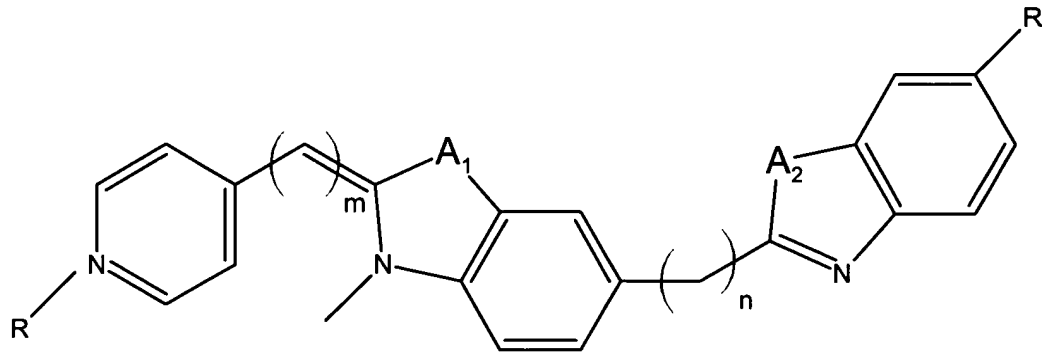
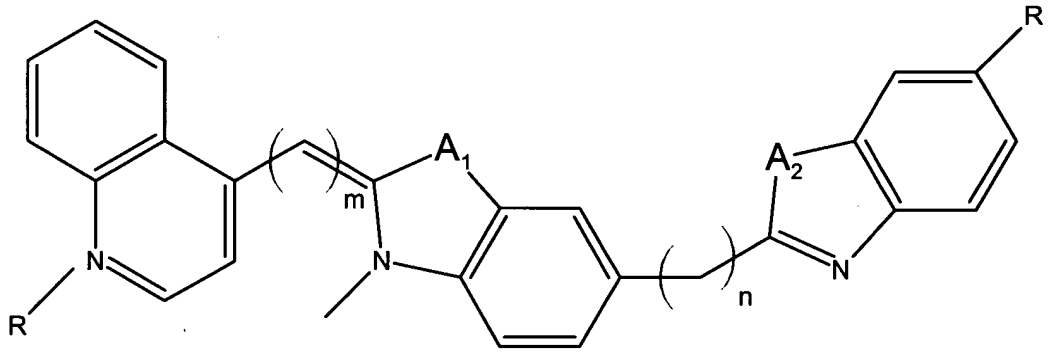
IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A cyanine dye having the formula:





or



wherein A_1 and A_2 are each independently O, S or N, and R is H or a hydrocarbon, optionally containing a heteroatom, and m is an integer from 0 to 5, and n is an integer from 0 to 5.

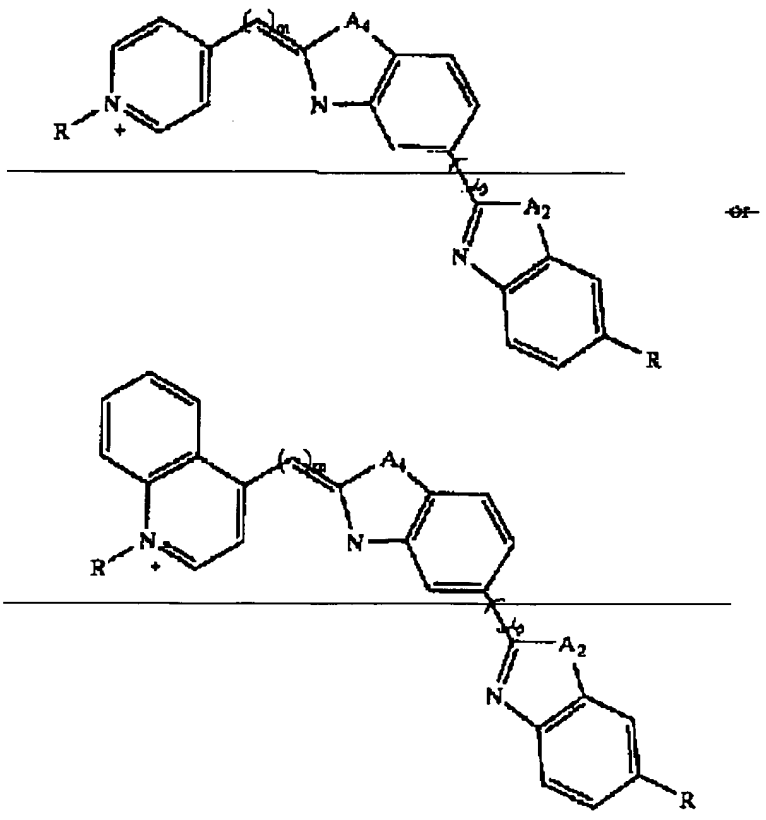
2. (Original) The cyanine dye of claim 1, wherein R is methyl or ethyl, and m is 1 and n is 0.

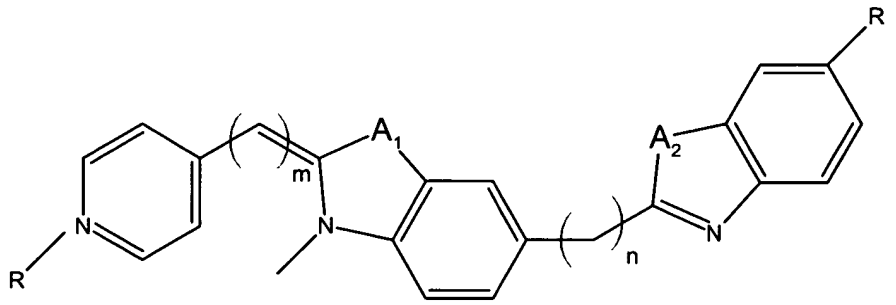
3. (Original) The cyanine dye of claim 1, wherein R is methyl or ethyl, m is 1 and n is 0, and A_1 and A_2 are S.

4. (Original) The cyanine dye of claim 1, wherein R is methyl or ethyl, m is 1 and n is 0, and A_1 and A_2 are O.

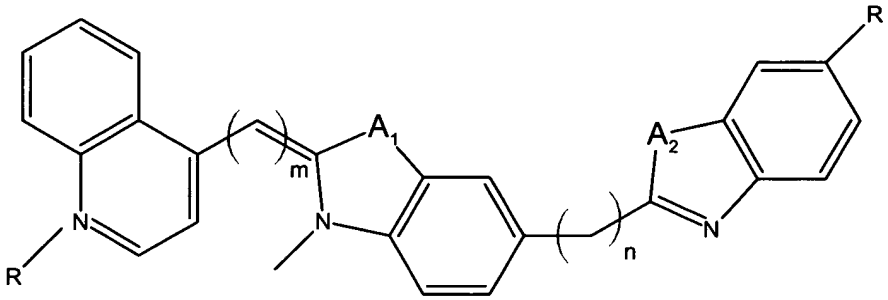
5. (Original)The cyanine dye of claim 1, wherein R is methyl or ethyl, m is 1 and n is 0, A_1 is S and A_2 is O.

6. (Currently Amended) A hybridization probe comprising a sequence-recognizing nucleic acid portion and a reporter portion, wherein the reporter portion comprises a cyanine dye having the formula:





or



wherein A_1 and A_2 are each independently O, S or N, and R is H or a hydrocarbon, optionally containing a heteroatom, and m is an integer from 0 to 5, and n is an integer from 0 to 5.

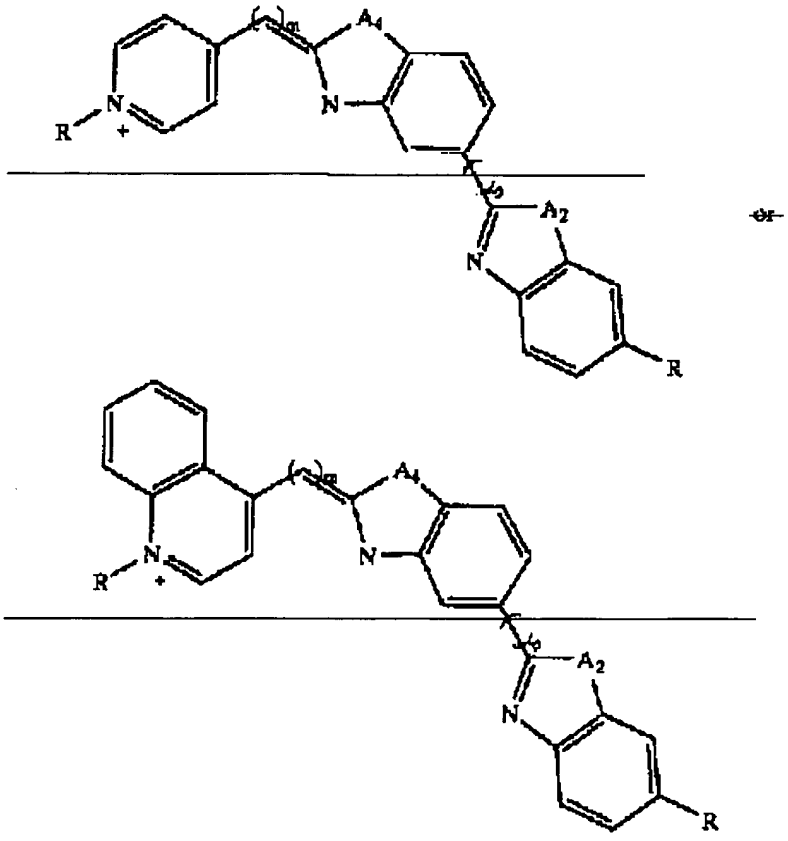
7. (Original) The probe of claim 6, wherein R is methyl or ethyl, and m is 1 and n is 0.

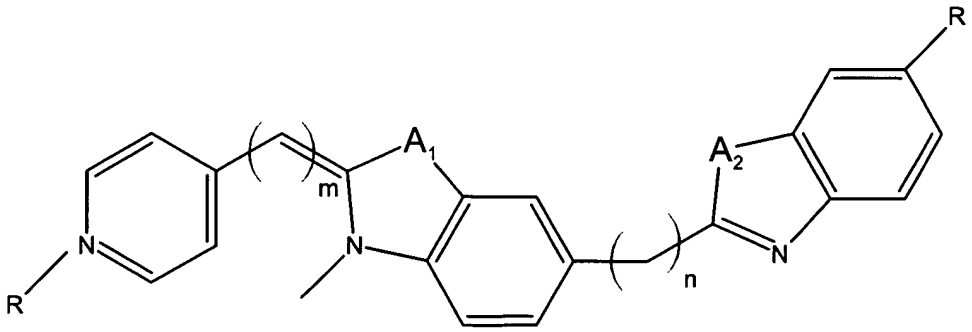
8. (Original) The probe of claim 6, wherein R is methyl or ethyl, m is 1 and n is 0, and A_1 and A_2 are S.

9. (Original) The probe of claim 6, wherein R is methyl or ethyl, m is 1 and n is 0, and A_1 and A_2 are O.

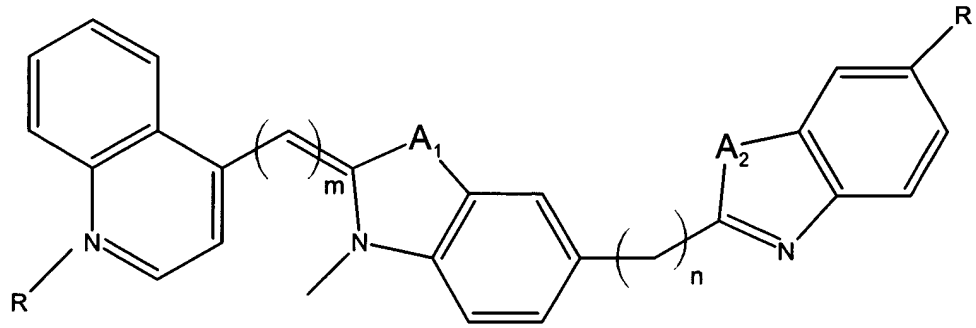
10. (Original) The probe of claim 6, wherein R is methyl or ethyl, m is 1 and n is 0, A_1 is S and A_2 is O.

11. (Currently Amended) A method for detecting the presence of double-stranded DNA in a sample comprising the steps of: introducing into the sample a cyanine dye having the formula:





or



wherein A_1 and A_2 are each independently O, S or N, and R is H or a hydrocarbon, optionally containing a heteroatom, and m is an integer from 0 to 5, and n is an integer from 0 to 5; and detecting fluorescence from the cyanine dye, wherein the fluorescence intensity from the cyanine dye is increased in the presence of double-stranded DNA as a result of binding of the cyanine dye in the minor groove of the double-stranded DNA.

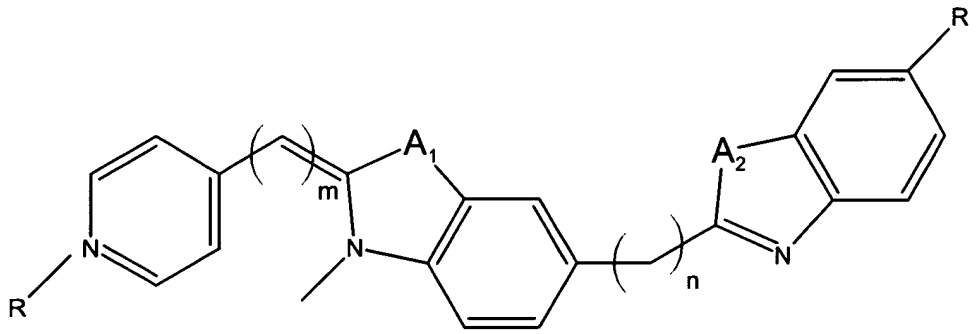
12. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein R is methyl or ethyl, and m is 1 and n is 0.

13. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein R is methyl or ethyl, m is 1 and n is 0, and A_1 and A_2 are S.

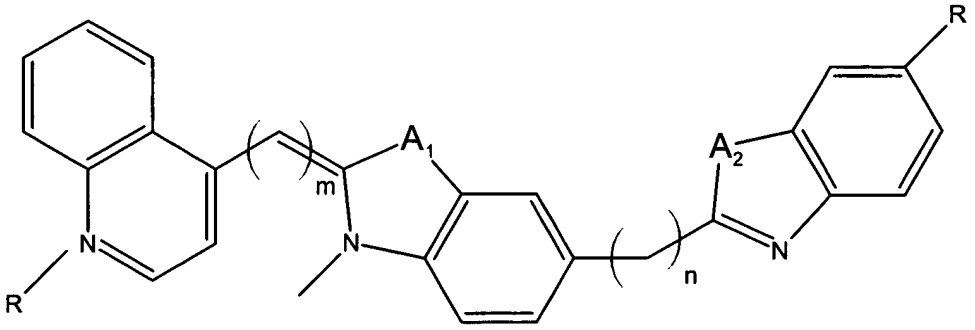
14. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein R is methyl or ethyl, m is 1 and n is 0, and A_1 and A_2 are O.

15. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein R is methyl or ethyl, m is 1 and n is 0, A_1 is S and A_2 is O.

16. (Withdrawn-Currently Amended) A method for monitoring a real time PCR reaction by detection of the formation of double-stranded DNA, comprising the steps of performing real time PCR in the presence of a fluorescent dye that interacts with double-stranded DNA, and monitoring fluorescence from the fluorescent dye, wherein the fluorescent dye increases its fluorescent intensity when it is locked in a minor groove position in double stranded DNA, and wherein the dye comprises ~~at least 2 aromatic ring systems both comprising at least one nitrogen atom, which rings are linked by a alkyne group having up to four carbon atoms to form a conjugated bond, and the dye further comprises at least a third aromatic system linked thereto via a bond having a significant double string character, such as a single bond or a ethyne bond, to provide a stiff conjugated system~~ a cyanine dye having the formula:



or



wherein A_1 and A_2 are each independently O, S or N, and R is H or a hydrocarbon, optionally containing a heteroatom, and m is an integer from 0 to 5, and n to an integer from 0 to 5.

17-20. (Cancelled)

21. (Original) The method of claim 20, wherein R is methyl or ethyl, and m is 1 and n is 0.

22. (Original) The method of claim 20, wherein R is methyl or ethyl, m is 1 and n is 0, and A_1 and A_2 are S.

23. (Original) The method of claim 20, wherein R is methyl or ethyl, m is 1 and n is 0, and A_1 and A_2 are O.

24. (Original) The method of claim 20, wherein R is methyl or ethyl, m is 1 and n is 0, A_1 is S and A_2 is O.